We asked...  
You told us

Home Heating Fuels

The Census Bureau conducts a census of population and housing every 10 years. This bulletin is one of a series that shows the questions asked in the 1990 census and the answers that you, the American people, gave. Each bulletin focuses on a question or group of questions appearing on the 1990 census questionnaires.

In question H14 on the 1990 census forms, we asked people to tell us which fuel they used most for heating their house or apartment. The pie chart shows what you told us in replying to this question.

- In 1990, gas was the most frequently used energy source for heating homes. Natural (piped) or bottled gas was used to heat 57 percent of the housing units in the United States.
- The Nation also relied heavily on electricity as a heating source. In 1990, electricity was the main source of heat in 26 percent of housing units.
- About 12 percent of residences used fuel oil, and a small percentage of homes (4 percent) used wood, coal, or solar energy.
- Only 1 percent of housing units used other types of fuels or did not use fuel at all. In Hawaii, for example, temperatures stay warm throughout the year, and most homes do not have a need for heating fuel.

Changes in the Type of Fuel Used for Heating Homes

The bar chart shows how the use of gas, electricity, and fuel oil changed between 1970 and 1990.

- Gas remained the most common heating fuel throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, although its use decreased slightly from 61 percent in 1970 to 57 percent in 1990.
- On the other hand, electricity and fuel oil showed dramatic changes during this period. Fuel oil use dropped sharply from 26 to 12 percent, while the use of electricity increased from 8 to 26 percent.
- The shift from fuel oil to electricity resulted, in part, from the population movement to the Sun Belt States where climates are warmer and heat pumps are more popular. The high cost of oil during the energy crisis in the 1970’s also played a role in the change in household fuel choices of consumers.

Census Trivia: According to the 1990 census, which State had the highest percentage of housing units heated by electricity? Which State had the highest percentage heated by fuel oil? (Answer on reverse.)

1 Data on home heating fuels were collected only from occupied housing units and thus do not include vacant units. The information on home heating fuels is based on a sample and, therefore, is subject to sampling variability.
Gas Was the Predominant Heating Fuel in All Regions
Percent of Occupied Housing Units Using Home Heating Fuels
by Region: 1990

Metro Areas More Dependent on Piped Gas Than Nonmetro Areas
Percent of Occupied Housing Units by Type of Home Heating Fuel: 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fuel</th>
<th>Metro</th>
<th>Nonmetro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural (piped) gas</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottled gas</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel oil</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/No fuel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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